

Roebuck Primary School and Nursery

St Margarets, Stevenage, SG2 8RG

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement has not been consistently good, particularly in English in Years 3 to 6.
- Year 6 results in English were low last year. Standards are improving but attainment in writing lags behind that of reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is improving but has not been consistently good enough over time to ensure good progress across the school.
- There are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and the amount of work they produce. In some lessons, the work set for pupils is too easy, especially for the more able, and learning does not always move on at a quick enough pace.
- Leadership, including by governors, has not, in the past, paid enough attention to how well teachers are raising pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and staff are now taking positive action to raise achievement and improve teaching.
- Children in Nursery and Reception settle quickly into school life and make good progress.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 has improved and is now above average.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons or part-lessons.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, staff, and a representative from the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the school's own parental survey.
- Fifteen questionnaires from staff were analysed.
- Inspectors examined school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' plans, pupils' work and the school's planning for improvement.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- An above-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2012, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Children begin in the Nursery at the age of 3 for mornings only.
- The school educates all pupils onsite. There is no alternative educational provision off the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good by making sure that:
 - teachers always set tasks which are at the right level of difficulty for individual pupils, particularly the more able.
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can learn, and the quantity of work they can produce are always high enough
 - pupils' learning and each lesson always moves on at a quick pace.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6, particularly in writing, and raise attainment to at least average by the end of Year 6, by:
 - teachers observing best practice in the teaching of writing in other schools
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write long pieces of work in all classes
 - improving pupils' handwriting and the way they present their work.
- Strengthen leadership and management, including by governors, by ensuring that leaders:
 - undertake regular checks on the quality of teaching in all classes and base their conclusions on how well teachers are improving achievement in all subjects, and particularly in English
 - check at least termly on how pupil premium funds are spent and the impact this funding has on the progress of eligible pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' results in English last year were low and pupils had made inadequate progress through Key Stage 2 in reading and writing. Pupils had made the progress they should in mathematics.
- The school has taken positive action to arrest the underachievement in Key Stage 2 and pupils are now making the progress they should but attainment in writing lags behind that in reading and mathematics. Attainment in the current Year 6 is moving closer to the standard expected. During the past three years, attainment in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 has improved to reach above-average standards.
- Pupils' progress in writing is improving. Pupils write for a range of purposes and their grammar, punctuation and spelling are developing well. However, pupils in Year 3 to 6 do not always have sufficient opportunities to write detailed and extended pieces. There are also inconsistencies in handwriting and in their presentation of work. By contrast, Year 2 pupils write with well-formed letters. Many pupils in Year 2 have a fluent and joined handwriting. Many write good-quality extended pieces.
- More-able pupils are not always extended enough because the tasks they are set in lessons are sometimes too easy. By contrast, more-able pupils are challenged well in Year 2.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress they should. In a number of lessons seen, these pupils were taught and supported well.
- Appropriate steps are being taken to raise the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding. However, while there are some individual successes, the action taken, such as the provision of one- to-one support, is too recent for its impact on achievement to be seen. This group of pupils generally attains less well than other pupils in the school and their attainment is particularly low. In 2012, these pupils were the equivalent of more than a year behind their classmates and similar pupils nationally.
- In a number of lessons, pupils make good progress because of the opportunities provided for them to discuss their learning in pairs or small groups. However, there are not enough opportunities in all classes to extend and reinforce this initial discussion work.
- Most pupils enjoy books and show positive attitudes to reading. Pupils benefit from good teaching of letters and the sounds they make. The structured lessons where pupils receive direction and guidance on reading from the teacher and teaching assistants work well.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is showing improvement in Years 3 to 6. Pupils acquire secure mathematical knowledge and understanding across the school. They apply their numeracy skills effectively to solve practical problems. By the end of Year 2, an above-average proportion of pupils attain the higher than expected Level 3.
- Children start in the Nursery with knowledge and skills below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception because of good teaching and the well-planned indoor and outdoor learning activities provided.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been consistently good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- At times, expectations of what pupils can achieve and the quantity of work they produce, particularly in English, are not high enough. Teaching in mathematics, in contrast, is now good because teachers set aside more time for practical and extended activities to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils are not always set work at the right level for their abilities and needs. In particular, older more-able pupils do not always have tasks which extend their learning. Occasionally, the pace of pupils' learning is hindered by over-long introductions by the teacher and pupils are not moved on to the main task soon enough.
- Teachers establish strong relationships with pupils and create a positive climate for learning. This, together with teachers' effective management of pupils, leads to good behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. As a result, pupils get on well together and show consideration and respect for others.
- The teaching of phonics, (letters and the sounds they make) works well in most classes.
- In a highly successful Year 2 lesson, pupils made outstanding progress in writing a description of an island. Attractive illustrations provided inspiration and stimuli for pupils. The teachers' very clear explanations and demonstrations promoted learning well. Pupils responded very well to their teachers' expectations and their writing moved on at a brisk pace.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with reading and numeracy.
- Teachers have worked well to improve the marking of pupils' work and feedback. Teachers' marking provides encouragement and identify why pupils' work is good. They provide constructive comments on how pupils can improve.
- The quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception class is effective and children make good progress. There is an effective blend of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to explore and learn independently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils across the school show good attitudes to learning. They are attentive, cooperative and work well in pairs and groups in learning activities. Behaviour in lessons and in and around the school is good.
 - Parents believe that their children are happy, safe, well looked after and that the school promotes good behaviour. The findings of the inspection reflect these positive views.
 - Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and the different forms that it can take such as persistent name-calling, physical bullying and cyber-bullying. Pupils say there is no bullying and know the action to take should it occur. They are confident that any bullying that occurred would be dealt with by the adults in the school.
 - Pupils are considerate and respectful. They value the views of others and show a clear
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understanding of different cultures and faiths.

- Attendance levels are in line with the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management have not promoted consistently good achievement for pupils and good teaching in all year groups over time.
- The headteacher observes teaching and provides constructive feedback to teachers. However, until recently, judgements on teaching quality have not been sufficiently linked to how successfully teachers are improving pupils' achievement. While good practice within the school is shared on a regular basis, teachers have not had sufficient opportunities to observe high-quality practice in other schools to develop their own.
- Development and training for staff are linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Decisions about staff promotion and salary increases are correctly based on responsibilities, staff performance and, to a limited but increasing extent, the progress that pupils make.
- The pupil premium funding has been allocated to provide eligible pupils with one-to-one tuition and additional class support. This has not proved effective in raising the achievement of these pupils, and leaders and the governing body have not done enough to monitor the impact of pupil premium funding in improving outcomes for pupils.
- The local authority has a clear and accurate overview of how well the school is performing and has helped the school to improve teaching.
- All pupils have full access to the range of opportunities that the school provided. Discrimination, in any form, is not tolerated in the school. However, not all pupils receive the consistently good teaching that ensures that they make the progress they need to.
- The school provides a good range of subjects and topics to promote pupils' learning. Practical problem solving in mathematics has been extended. Opportunities for writing are being increased. Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of additional clubs and activities such as athletics, choir, cooking, eco-gardening, lacrosse and steel pans. Pupils' artwork is of good quality.
- The headteacher and staff have created a positive and safe environment for its pupils. As a result, pupils are safe, they relate well to others and their behaviour is good.
- Through careful analysis and checking, the headteacher and key leaders have an accurate overview of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. The headteacher and staff are rightly focusing on raising achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, and strengthening the consistency of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and supportive. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and are fully aware that pupils' achievement and teaching need to improve and be more consistent. Governors have begun to develop a clearer overview of pupils' attainment and progress and how these compare to schools nationally. They

are provided with regular reports on the quality of teaching. Governors understand recent requirements relating to management of staff performance but have not ensured that pay and promotion are properly linked to the progress pupils make. Their checks on the impact of pupil premium funding have not been frequent or rigorous enough to ensure that it results in accelerated progress for eligible pupils. Governors recognise the need to engage in further training to improve their effectiveness. They have ensured that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133263
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	402564

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Marshman
Headteacher	Jenn Phelps
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2009
Telephone number	01438 311937
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